

~ in memoriam ~

Barbara Barker
(October 31, 1938–January 3, 2002)

Barbara Mackin Barker Warner was an internationally acclaimed dance historian who focused attention on the links between nineteenth-century ballet and popular entertainment forms. A leading scholar in her own right, she facilitated the professional and scholarly goals of her colleagues and students. She refused to accept categorization in dance as a performer or a scholar.

Barbara had been a Ballet West ballerina, a Lido Bluebell Girl, and a technique teacher before her desire for her department to take her and her subject seriously made her complete a doctorate in Performance Studies from New York University. She gave her first national presentation at the bicentennial CORD conference in Philadelphia in 1976, where her paper was an early version of the research that became her dissertation and first book—the American touring careers of the Italian ballerinas Maria Bonfanti, Rita Sangalli, and Giuseppina Morlacchi.

She lectured and published frequently on Lydia Thompson and the original production of *The Black Crook*, the professional and social life of the nineteenth-century ballet girl, and the spectacles of Imre and Bolossy Kiralfy. She was awarded a Senior Fulbright Fellowship in 1984 to research the Kiralfys and edited the latter's memoirs as *Bolossy Kiralfy: Creator of Great Musical Spectacles*. She won praise for her meticulous work documenting the Kiralfys' extravaganzas as well as their extravagant claims.

In 1986 she left the University of Texas to become the Chair of the Dance Department at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and was credited with moving the program into national prominence. The university named its new dance facility the Barbara Barker Center for Dance in May 1999. She served as the president of the Society of Dance History Scholars from 1992 to 1995.

After retiring from teaching in 1998, she focused on a professional biography of her friend and mentor Agnes de Mille. As well as writing the study, she helped to develop The De Mille Project, a program of multigenerational rehearsals and reconstructions of choreography, which has been cited by the National Initiative to Preserve American Dance as a model for documentation.

For the last seven years of her life, Barbara ran conferences, wrote articles, and fought breast cancer. She is survived by her family, her students, and her many friends and colleagues.

Barbara Cohen-Stratyrner
New York City